

# 90° to Zamboanga

*Memoirs of a 20-year Marijuana Smuggling Adventure*



**Rick Bibbero**

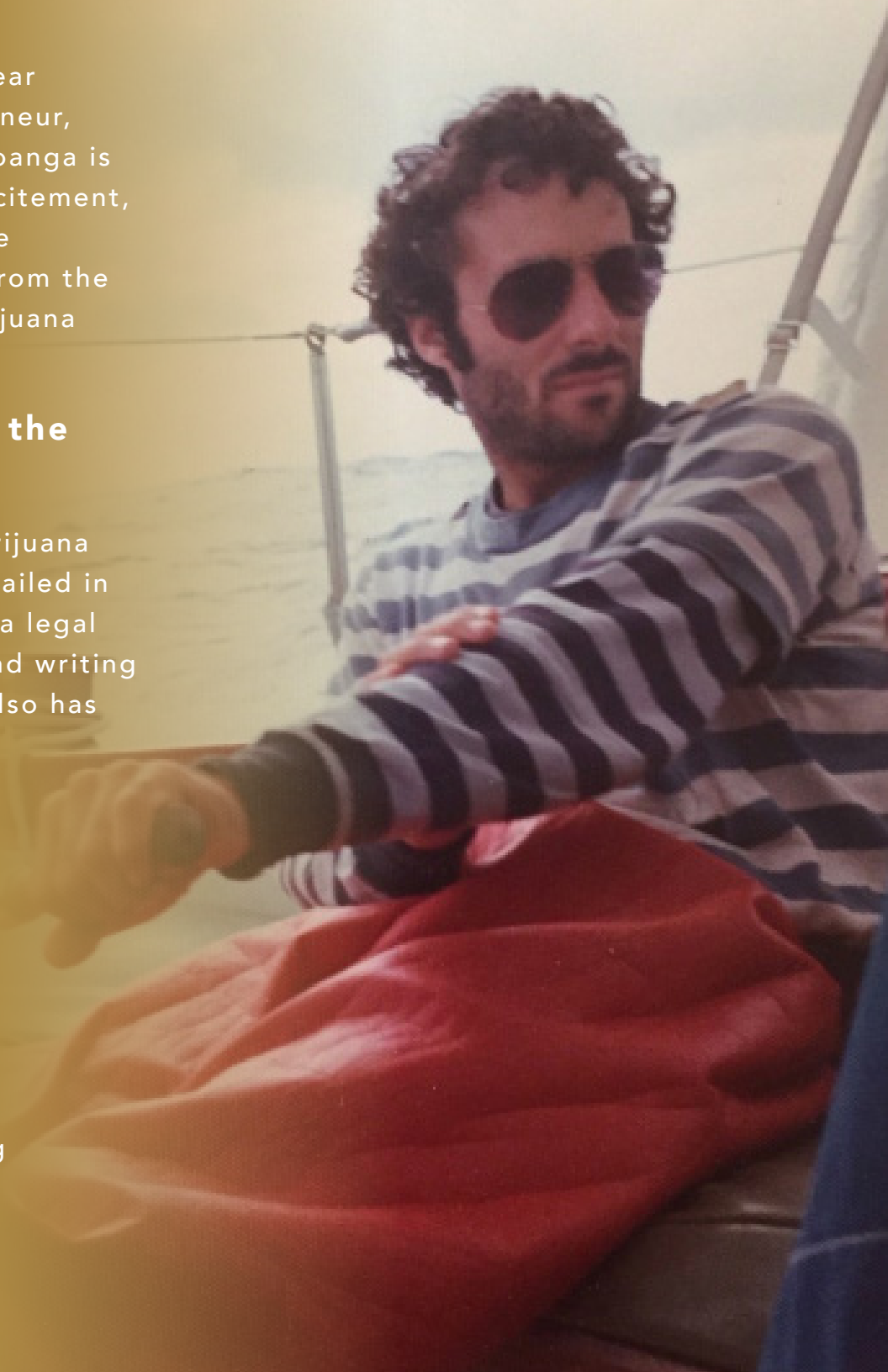
90° TO ZAMBOANGA  
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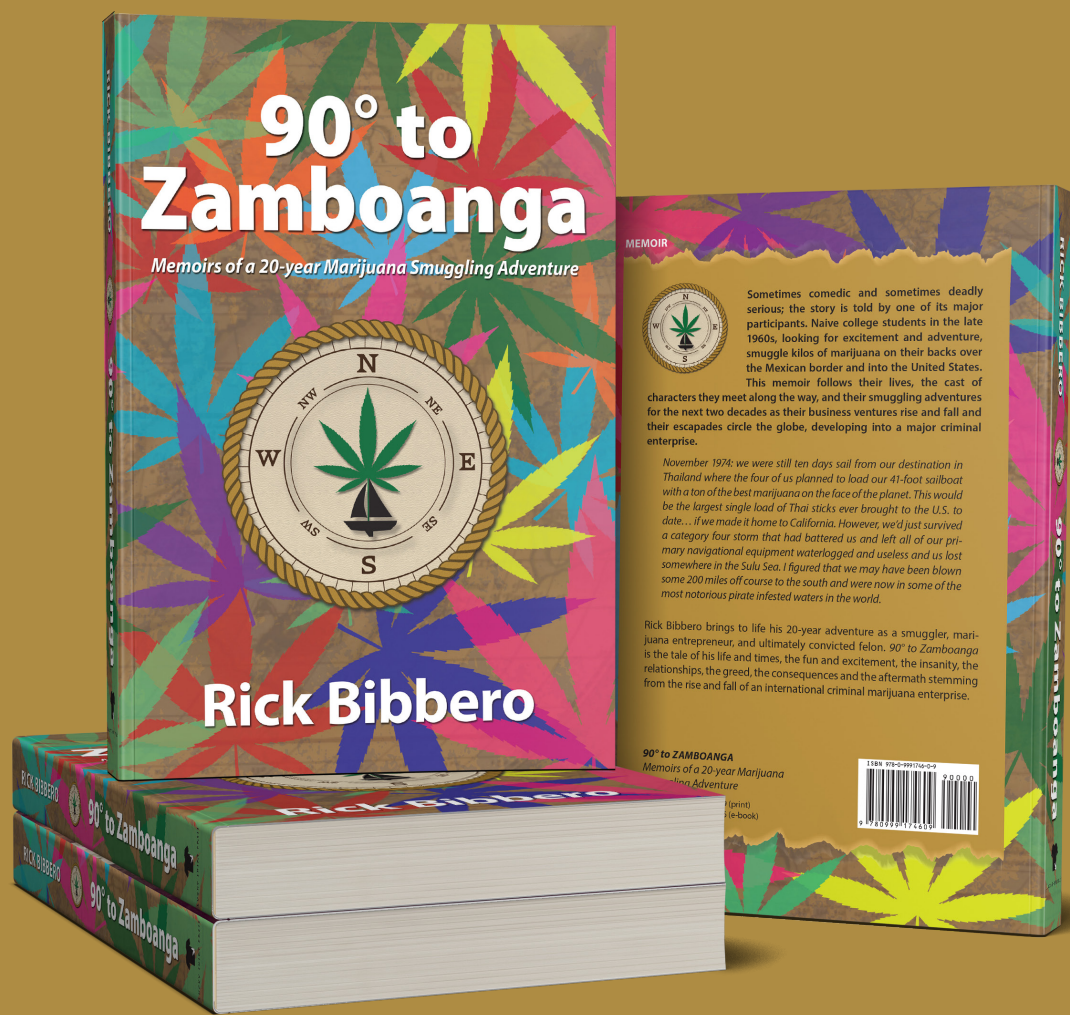


Rick Bibbero brings to life his twenty-plus-year adventure as a smuggler, marijuana entrepreneur, and ultimately convicted felon. *90° to Zamboanga* is the tale of his life and times, the fun and excitement, the insanity, the relationships, the greed, the consequences and the aftermath stemming from the rise and fall of an international criminal marijuana enterprise.

**Rick is one of the true pioneers in the marijuana industry.**

Aside from the 25 years of his life in the marijuana business and its aftermath as thoroughly detailed in this book, Rick Bibbero has since worked as a legal assistant using some of the legal research and writing skills he acquired as a jailhouse lawyer. He also has been both a licensed general contractor and real estate agent. In 2002 Rick gained a little more notoriety by winning a contest to design a new license plate for the State of Nevada. Throughout his life Rick has been an avid skier and snowboarder who also enjoys playing golf, pickleball, bicycling, horseback riding and reading. He and his wife have a daughter, three grandchildren and one great-grandchild and today along with their two dogs are enjoying their golden years and as he put it: "We're living life."





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**Q: TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF...**

**A:** (In a nutshell)... 73 years old. Grew up in San Francisco in the 50s & 60s (that kind of says it all). College graduate. Veteran of the National Guard. Married. Divorced. With 2nd Wife. Daughter. 3 grandchildren. 1 great-grandson. 2 dogs. Former marijuana smuggler. Former Businessman. Former Building Contractor. Former Realtor. Convicted Felon. Skier. Golfer. Reader. Former Adventurer. Now...Living Life (quietly)!

**Q: GIVE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR BOOK..**

**A:** 90° to Zamboanga is a memoir of my twenty-plus years as a marijuana smuggler, entrepreneur and ultimately convicted felon. It is an adventure story told in the first person that chronicles my life as a founder and principal player in a marijuana smuggling organization that spanned the world for over two decades. The story begins in the late 1960's and details how two childhood friends, now college students smuggled kilos of pot on our backs in the middle of the night across the Mexican border. It transitions in the 70's to sailboat loads from Mexico and ultimately Thailand in heart-stopping, hair-raising adventures in war torn countries, at sea against mother nature's fury and world travel that people dream about.

The story continues into the 80s with adventures and misadventures leading to courtroom drama, incarceration and the aftermath told in an engaging and easy-to-read novelistic style. 90° to Zamboanga is the complete story of an insider's view of what it really took to make it happen. It is a story retold by of one of the principal participants as seen through his eyes presented so that the reader is 'a fly on the wall' to all of the action and craziness, to the relationships... the women who gravitated to the bad boys and the parents who didn't understand.

The story is a history lesson and cautionary tale of the times and of the **iconic mantra: SEX, DRUGS AND ROCK AND ROLL.**

**Q: WHY DID YOU WRITE 90 DEGREES TO ZAMBOANGA?**

**A:** While the story was unfolding and as players in the story, my friends and I, always said amongst ourselves: "This story would make a great movie!" So, after it was all over I contemplated this and began to make notes and outlines and soon realized that because of the length and complexity of the story; if it ever wanted to be a movie it would have to be a book first. And I wanted it to be detailed enough that if it ever were made into a movie it would not be left up to a director's imagination to create something that wasn't 'the story'. I would have to write it thoroughly enough and from my own personal true experiences so that it would be my story and mine alone.

**Q: THE WRITING STYLE OF 90 DEGREES TO ZAMBOANGA IS SO EXPRESSIVE. CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR METHODS?**

**A:** I read many books on the subject to see how others had done it before I decided to actually write my own. Most were stories told by the participant to others who actually wrote the story. Some were third-person narratives written by authors first researching then writing on the subject. Very few were actually written by the participant. I felt that if I was going to undertake the project it was going to be written totally by me and me alone. If It was going be my story, it had different, very unique and nothing like anything else that had been previously written. It had to be honest, authentic and true, very personal, from the heart and from my own personal unique experiences. I view myself as a storyteller so I presented the book in the style of a true action/ adventure story as seen through my own eyes and as felt with my own emotion.



**Q: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PASSAGE IN THE BOOK AND WHY?**

**A:** I call my favorite passage 'The Moment'. It is the moment that I realized that I had transcended from the world of an average everyday large volume pot smuggler into the rarefied stratosphere of an elite pioneer, at the very forefront of a whole new cadre of marijuana entrepreneurs that were to follow my lead. That moment came on a clear crisp morning in the late winter of 1975 as I described the scene and the emotions as we sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge with our first ton of precious Thai Sticks concealed in every nook and cranny. It was the culmination of a year and a half of planning, strategizing, surviving, projecting and fantasizing about the future. It was also a moment to relish in the success of the accomplishment and to realize that my world would never be the same from that moment on.

I have however asked that question of my readers and my favorite answer came from the DEA agent who chased and ultimately busted me. Its funny (but not really) how his favorite passage was more of the cautionary aspect of the story...

"Since I was the first born and only son of successful Jewish parents it was indeed a hard, if not impossible, act to follow. Sarcastic remarks from my father were nothing new to me. I grew up listening to them and was almost constantly the target of such comments. I called it 'sarcasm with a bite.'

One such comment has forever stuck in my mind.

One day when I was still in high school, I rather optimistically suggested to my father the possibility of following in his footsteps by applying to Stanford University, which he had graduated from in 1937. It was a long shot at best considering my less than stellar academic grades. His response was typical of what I'd grown up with and had to endure on a regular basis. "Son, the only way you'll get into Stanford is in their museum with your head in a pickle jar labeled: 'The Man With No Brain.'" So much for my self esteem."

**Q: HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE TITLE?**

**A:** I wanted something unique. Something that was unusual enough to pique one's interest at a glance, but would not give too much away. The name, 90° to Zamboanga, came about as an exclamation of the location where we found ourselves after having been blown off course and lost at sea during a typhoon and was the first clue as to our supposed location. Upon reflection and years later the unusual sounding title stuck as I was writing the story and served as a metaphor as to how unpredictable that particular journey was and how unique the entire adventure was and is to this day.

**Q: WHAT CAN READERS HOPE TO LEARN FROM THIS BOOK?**

**A:** Today marijuana is legal in the US as for medical and/or recreational use in 31 states and several countries around the world. None of this would have happened were it not for pioneers and 'the founding fathers' of the modern marijuana movement of the late 60s and 70's like myself and others. So my hope is that readers of my story learn what I and others went through back then, when cannabis/ marijuana/pot/weed/ganja was totally illegal everywhere, that laid the foundation for the acceptance of it that we are experiencing today. Also I hope readers learn that my story is a cautionary tale. I dedicated the book to a priest and mentor who sagely advised me to listen and learn from the wisdom of the other guy. He said: "You don't have to go to the electric chair to know that's a place where you don't want to go!"

**Q: WHAT WAS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF WRITING THIS BOOK?**

**A:** The research to substantiate and support this story was something that I never contemplated when I started writing it. Writing a story that I had lived was one thing, but doing the supporting geographical and historical research to properly identify locations, persons and historical events, researching unique backstories to various people, places and events, legal research, newspaper and magazine archival research was daunting and took almost as long as it did to actually write the book.



**Q: WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO SELF-PUBLISH?**

**A:** The choice came out of necessity. After years of trying to get an agent/publisher with no success, I felt that if I ever wanted to see my manuscript in print I had better do it myself... if I wanted it to happen while I was still alive!

**Q: WHO ARE YOUR FAVORITE WRITERS?**

**A:** Herman Melville, Hunter S. Thompson, Jack London, Anthony Grey, C.J. Box, Nelson DeMille

**Q: WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS?**

**A:** Mostly from personal experience. While living this story, I had to be very careful to not share what I was actually doing with most everyone. However, in writing this story and retelling it in this book; I have to totally embrace the story with everyone. That's a strange dichotomy and total reversal for me to come to terms with. And since I had so many pent up adventures over the years that I had to keep quiet about, now and since writing the story they just flow out like water going over a waterfall.

**Q: WHAT OTHER BOOKS HAVE INSPIRED YOU?**

**A:** *Moby Dick* and *Typee* by Herman Melville, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* by Hunter S. Thompson, *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London, *Saigon* by Anthony Grey







Mid-Summer 1969 "One small step for (a) man, one giant leap for mankind!" Those immortal words from Neil Armstrong as he stepped onto the surface of the moon on July 20, 1969, crackled on our TV set in the hot summer afternoon in Stockton, California. I watched the event in my apartment having just returned from a morning of water skiing on the San Joaquin Delta with my roommate Del Carlucci and several other buddies attending summer school at the University of the Pacific (UOP). We were sitting in the living room on giant multi-colored paisley pillows enjoying multiple joints of marijuana.

Through a smoke-filled haze we stared in amazement and in a trance, watching the moon landing events unfold before our unbelieving eyes. Right then our stupor was broken by the sound of the phone ringing. I answered it. It was my old childhood friend Willie Sherman calling me from Tempe, Arizona.

Willie and I had grown up together in the chic San Francisco neighborhood of Sea Cliff where we were neighbors. He was several years younger than me and the youngest of five children, another Jew from the neighborhood whose grandparents emigrated from Prussia. Willie was the epitome of tall, dark and handsome and much the ladies man. Six feet tall, thin as a rail with curly dark shoulder length hair and a wild spirit, Willie was the most gifted natural athlete I ever knew...

"Rick, you've got to come down here right away. A couple of friends of mine are making some serious money running dope across the Mexican border. They score a few kilos from a Mexican contact and walk it back across the border. It's easy, fun and a real adventure. Get down here, now!"

*90 Degrees to Zamboanga: Memoirs of a 20-year Marijuana Smuggling Adventure . Rick Bibbero, Lucky Shirt Press.*

In this astonishing true story of adventure and survival, Rick Bibbero details how he and his cohorts built an international cannabis cartel. The words bring to life Bibbero's story of exploration, adventure, and survival against all odds. I could not put the book down. Given the rising acceptance of cannabis across the country in 2018, this memoir is a testament to the brave men - and women - who opened up the U.S. marketplace in the 1970s and 1980s. Great read. Well written.

- Heidi

This is an amazing story of adventure during the early years of marijuana smuggling! Rick Bibbero is like the cat with nine lives, surviving all the twists and turns of this dangerous business. What starts out as just a couple of young college guys looking for excitement (and to make a few bucks) quickly turns into a global drug smuggling operation. This true story gives the reader insight into the history of marijuana smuggling. Much like alcohol and the prohibition years, marijuana was once a highly illegal substance but is now becoming a legitimate U.S. industry. The marijuana smugglers of the past were certainly ahead of their time! Great read and a story that would make a terrific Netflix series!!

- Karen A.

This is one of the very BEST books I have ever read. Each page keeps you looking forward to the next page. I was at ASU from 1969 to 1973 and I can only imagine the risk these guys took and the life style they played; it would make an incredible movie ! The 60s and 70s were crazy times with Vietnam, the hippie culture change and the marijuana influence on the youth. Now were are seeing going from felony charges in many cases to legalization of pot ???

Funny, I have known the author for many years, but I found out in the book that I really did not know anything about Rick's past experiences. It was a complete surprise to me. Rick does not sugar coat or exaggerate the events. I really enjoyed this book and I think you will find it is hard to put down.

- Greg K.



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